



**U.S. Department of Justice**

**JOHN C. RICHTER**  
**United States Attorney**

**NEWS RELEASE**

**Western District of Oklahoma**

---

**For Immediate Release:**

**October 18, 2005**

**SEVEN CURRENT AND FORMER U.S. SOLDIERS AGREE TO PLEAD GUILTY  
TO CONSPIRING TO TAKE BRIBES IN EXCHANGE FOR TRANSPORTING COCAINE**

John C. Richter, United States Attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma, announced today that seven current and former United States soldiers have agreed to plead guilty to conspiring to take bribes in exchange for transporting cocaine while wearing military uniforms. Four of the seven defendants were members of the military when they transported cocaine at the request of believed drug traffickers. It was instead an FBI undercover operation called "Operation Tarnish Star." Those agreeing to plead guilty are:

- **Thomas A. Ball**, 32, of Lawton, a Captain in the United States Army
- **Jason Campbell**, 26, of Lawton, formerly a Specialist in the United States Army
- **Antonio Curry**, 27, of Fort Worth, Texas, a Staff Sergeant for the United States Army
- **Shannon Elleby**, 24, of Lawton; formerly a Specialist in the United States Army
- **Maurice Rogers**, 33, of Lawton; formerly a Staff Sergeant in the United States Army
- **Leslie Ward**, 26, of Lawton, a Sergeant in the United States Army
- **Derrick Williams**, 27, of Lawton, formerly a Private First Class in the United States Army

The charges allege that during the first three months of 2004, each defendant participated in at least one of three trips from the Wichita Falls, Texas, area to Oklahoma City, which the defendants believed that they were making on behalf of narcotics traffickers. Instead, the trips were arranged as part of an undercover investigation conducted by the FBI. Each of the three trips involved forty or more kilograms of cocaine and the defendants agreed to wear their military uniforms during the trips to protect the cocaine from police stops, searches, and seizures. It is alleged that each defendant was paid between \$2,000 and \$8,000 at the conclusion of each trip for the protection of the cocaine based upon their military status, as well as for recruitment of other members of the military desiring to participate in the conspiracy.

This investigation is related to a similar undercover FBI operation in Arizona entitled "Lively Green." Since May of this year, thirty-two current and former military and law enforcement personnel have agreed to plead guilty to federal criminal charges in Arizona involving taking bribes for wearing their official uniforms and using official vehicles to distribute cocaine from Arizona to other locations in the southwestern United States. That investigation began in December of 2001. Both the Arizona and Oklahoma investigations are on-going, and each defendant has agreed to cooperate in further prosecutions.

"The vast majority of military and law enforcement personnel serve with honor, dedication, and great sacrifice," stated United States Attorney Richter. "Corruption by a few, however, can have grave consequences for our Nation's security. Not only do these few threaten the integrity of our armed forces, we simply cannot protect the American people if those sworn to protect us join and conspire with our enemies."

If convicted, each defendant faces a maximum potential penalty of five years in federal prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

The public is reminded that the charges are merely accusations and that each defendant is presumed innocent unless and until found guilty in a court of law or the guilty plea is entered by the court. The government anticipates that each defendant will appear at a plea hearing in the next few weeks.

These cases are the result of an investigation conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with assistance from the Defense Criminal Investigative Service of the Department of Defense, the Criminal Investigation Division of the U.S. Army, and the Drug Enforcement Administration. The cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys David L. Walling and Scott E. Williams.

Reference is made to the Informations filed of record for further information. The Arizona investigation is more specifically described in Department of Justice press releases dated May 12, 2005, and August 31, 2005, found at:

[http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2005/May/05\\_crm\\_257.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2005/May/05_crm_257.htm)

[http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2005/August/05\\_crm\\_450.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2005/August/05_crm_450.htm)

\*\*\* End \*\*\*